

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
 NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
 OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

MV ETHAN ALLEN,  
 LAKE GEORGE, NEW YORK,  
 OCTOBER 2, 2005

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 \* Docket No.: DCA 06 MM 001  
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Interview of: MOUNIR RAHAL

National Transportation Safety Board  
 490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.  
 Washington, DC 20594

Thursday,  
 October 13, 2005

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to  
 notice, at 9:00 a.m.

BEFORE: MORGAN TURRELL

## APPEARANCES:

MORGAN TURRELL  
National Transportation Safety Board

MAURICE ALDRICH  
Warren County Sheriff's Office

SERGEANT WALTER SCHEDEL  
New York State Park Police

I N D E XITEMPAGE

Interview of Mounir Rahal:

By Mr. Turrell

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:00 a.m.)

MR. TURRELL: Good afternoon. It's 9:00 on October 13th. This is Morgan Turrell, the National Transportation Safety Board, investigating an Ethan Allen accident.

And to my left.

SGT. SCHEDEL: Sergeant Walt Schedel, New York State Park Police.

MR. ALDRICH: Investigator Mo Aldrich, Warren County Sheriff's.

MR. TURRELL: And today we're interviewing Mr. Rahal.

## INTERVIEW OF MOUNIR RAHAL

BY MR. TURRELL:

Q. Sell your name.

A. M-o-u-n-i-r.

Q. And your last name.

A. R-a-h-a-l.

Q. Okay. And what's your city and state of residence?

A. Queensbury, New York, 1 (indiscernible) Drive.

Q. Okay. I'll have you give contact information off the recording so we don't put that in the record. Mr. Rahal, can you tell us anything you know about the accident on October 2nd involving Ethan Allen?

A. Well, let's put it that way. I, I was basically spending most of the day out on the lake that morning. I tour

1 basically from the south end all the way up to the north end.  
2 It was my family, five kids, me and my wife, so seven passenger  
3 on my boat. Coming south from Ti, and I was probably doing  
4 approximately almost about I was going to say maybe it's about  
5 40 to 45 knots on my boat.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yes, I was cruising, doing almost 50 miles an hour.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Because the water was very, very calm, very few  
10 people on the lake, and beautiful day, beautiful day. I'm  
11 going to say probably -- see, I don't know the lake spot area,  
12 but when I'm on the lake, I know how to get to it. I did see,  
13 we passed the, the Mohegan.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I did pass it probably I'm going to say maybe two-  
16 third of the way before I got to my dock, which is my dock at  
17 boardwalk, so actually right on the south end of the lake. As  
18 usual, you know, kids plays with the horn, wave hello, yell and  
19 scream, you know, just the common thing you do up on the lake.  
20 And I was driving south to the west side of the lake.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And I, when I passed the boat that was on my far  
23 left, so the boat was traveling north, I would say northeast,  
24 okay.

25 Q. The Mohegan?

1           A.    The Mohegan.  So that's when we passed it.  And then  
2   probably immediately maybe like about five minutes actually  
3   when I passed them, my wife point out for me smoke, and you  
4   know being on the lake, I mean you see smoke a lot.  See  
5   accident happen in the front of you.  And smoke on the water  
6   that's the first sign somebody's in trouble.  So I kind of  
7   like, I don't mean to insult you, Mo, but looks like an Indian  
8   smoke, you know what I'm saying like sometimes you see like in  
9   the movies see like puff smoke goes up.

10           UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:  Smoke signals.

11           MR. RAHAL:  Yeah, yeah.  It's like boom, you know,  
12   it's like holy shock, and that's when we (indiscernible).  So I  
13   immediately, my wife said, come on, let's go check it out, so I  
14   immediately turned to my immediate right, you know, and that's  
15   still I'm, I'm cruising in my boat.  We, we got as close as  
16   possible to the smoke.  All I see is a boat.  I mean my wife  
17   saw it, and I was arguing with her.  She said no, it's a  
18   sailboat.  I said how do I know, it's just a boat, let's go  
19   check it out.  So it looks like a sailboat in the water because  
20   the boat was already upside down and all we see is the  
21   propeller, the engine and the, the whatever they call -- the  
22   thing that moves.

23           BY MR. TURRELL:

24           Q.    The rudder?

25           A.    Yeah.  All we see is just those things, and then we

1 hear screaming, like holy shit, you know, where is the sound  
2 coming from? And you know they're still looking into the boat,  
3 and then immediately I turned to the, to the side of the boat,  
4 and that's when I saw the people was, you know, screaming,  
5 yelling, and they're all kind of -- all just in the boat -- to  
6 see -- they all right, holding to the edge of the boat like  
7 this and the edge of the back end of it.

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. So actually, if you put the boat upside -- you know,  
10 back as it -- the way it should be, so they will be holding on  
11 the rear right side of the boat.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. You see what I'm saying?

14 Q. Yeah. Okay.

15 A. So the boat was upside down.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And then immediately, I mean it's, it's a horrible  
18 scene. It's, it's like all you see just shoulders, heads and  
19 arms out of the water and God knows how many. I mean I don't  
20 know how to count. Back then it's like (indiscernible).

21 Q. Uh-huh.

22 A. Just -- got close as possible to the boat and shut my  
23 engine and then started throwing, you know, cushions, floating  
24 devices, bumpers, life jackets, and immediately when I got  
25 there another boat came in. So we was actually two boats on

1 the first scene.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And the gentleman who pulled in when I saw him was,  
4 which I know him, John and Giselle Root. I don't know if --  
5 yeah. Because you know they immediately (indiscernible) from  
6 the accident scene, and they're very good friend of mine as  
7 well. So it's like I mean starting grabbing -- first I jumped  
8 into the water, and I grabbed the first person.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But truthfully, I felt scared with the person because  
11 she was grabbing at me. She was, she was pulling me. I mean  
12 she was a large size woman, and between the gasoline, between  
13 the oil in the water, the diesel, I mean it makes very hard to  
14 grab, very hard. So I said (indiscernible) this, you know, I  
15 put her on the things and I got my -- I have a 16-foot pole.  
16 Actually when I started you know getting closer, grabbing  
17 people with their clothes and just pull them down to the edge  
18 of my boat and lift them up.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And from that point on, I mean I think I managed to  
21 put either five or six people on my boat and two unconscious  
22 bodies, and by the time we left pretty much basically clearing  
23 the water, I don't know if there is a sheriff or a Lake  
24 George -- commissioner came in, and we unloaded it two  
25 unconscious body into the boat, and then I drove with the rest



1 of the folks back to the dock.

2 Q. Okay. Mr. Rahal, if you could just help us put some  
3 times.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. Can you tell us what time you left, you left? You  
6 left Ticonderoga, is that correct?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. What time did you leave Ticonderoga?

11 A. Probably I'm going to say honestly I left, I'm going  
12 to say probably like maybe around 2 o'clock.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Around 2 o'clock.

15 Q. Okay. And can you -- do you recall any position on  
16 the lake where you passed for the time besides your departure  
17 time, do you remember passing anything in your watch, give us  
18 any idea of any --

19 A. Only time is, to be honest with you, I looked at the,  
20 the -- which I had my daughter call 911 when we got there, and  
21 I looked back (indiscernible) exactly about 2:54.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Then after the fact, when we was already helping, you  
24 know, taking everything out.

25 Q. So, so your call -- so you think the accident

1 definitely occurred before 2:54?

2 A. Oh, absolutely. I mean honestly from my estimation,  
3 I will say, I would say the boat tipped over, I'm going to say  
4 maybe like around 2:30, 2:35, something like that.

5 Q. Okay. But definitely before 54 --

6 A. Way before.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I mean to be more specific, I will say it happened  
9 between 2:15 and, and, and 2:45.

10 Q. Okay. And do you by chance recall what time you may  
11 have passed the Mohegan? Just --

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. So the Mohegan was definitely going north on  
14 your port side?

15 A. On my left side exactly.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I was going -- south.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And do you have any idea generally -- you said it was  
21 about two-thirds of the way before your dock.

22 A. Right.

23 Q. Is there an island around there somewhere or  
24 some --

25 A. I will say, I do not know honestly the name of the,

1 the areas --

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How about maybe in relation to  
3 where Mr. Rahal's house is? Is that what you were trying to  
4 nail down?

5 MR. TURRELL: Right.

6 MR. RAHAL: Yeah.

7 BY MR. TURRELL:

8 Q. Just in relation --

9 A. -- have to have a map --

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Actually I do in the car in my  
11 backpack.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, in my backpack, there's  
14 a --

15 MR. TURRELL: We'll go off just for a moment.

16 (Off the record.)

17 (On the record.)

18 MR. TURRELL: So we'll resume. We're on the record  
19 again with Mr. Rahal.

20 BY MR. TURRELL:

21 Q. Okay. We're pointing out where you believe the --  
22 when you passed the Mohegan on the way south, on your way  
23 south.

24 A. Where, where is the island?

25 Q. There's one (indiscernible) here.

1           A.    Oh, okay.  All right, that's the five-mile zone.  I  
2    think what is boat club, Lake George Boat Club will be --

3           Q.    All right.

4           A.    Yeah, because over here in this there, I think --  
5    yeah, this is the first one, because I used to dock the boats  
6    quite some times ago over here at, at Sand and Surf.  So I will  
7    say honestly, I will say (indiscernible) pass some place over  
8    here.

9           Q.    Okay.  So just -- just east of Fish Hook Island?

10          A.    Yes.  Right over here.  And like I said, I was  
11   heading down this way, and I -- the Mohegan was down -- going  
12   down north up to my left.

13          Q.    Did the Mohegan pass what?  Canoe Islands --

14          A.    No.  I honestly I do not remember.  Probably I will  
15   say he -- I don't know, but I -- when I passed him over here, I  
16   did not look back.

17          Q.    Okay.

18          A.    I did not look back because when we got to right in  
19   here, that's where we immediately saw the smoke, and then we  
20   just zoomed in right away.

21          Q.    Okay.  So that's -- so it's down --

22          A.    Should be --

23          Q.    Yeah.

24          A.    Because like I said, I mean we come in over here and  
25   we didn't see it until we got here.  That's when we saw the

1 smoke.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So we did not actually see no boat or nothing.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. We just actually saw the smoke, immediately for the  
6 smoke sign.

7 Q. Sure.

8 A. And what's where I saw the boat.

9 Q. Okay. Did you by chance see any other passenger  
10 boats up north in your, in your transit?

11 A. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I came across one of  
12 my friends who docks with me. He -- him and his girlfriend was  
13 I think they was here some place.

14 Q. Uh-huh.

15 A. Some place they were just docking and, I mean  
16 (indiscernible) in the middle of the lake and they were  
17 swimming.

18 Q. Were there any other commercial passenger vessels,  
19 large -- any other vessels on the lake? Steamboat or, or  
20 Shoreline by chance?

21 A. I honestly I don't remember.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I (indiscernible).

24 Q. In your estimation, how many boats were out that day?  
25 Was it a busy day on the lake or --

1 A. You mean like passenger boats or pleasure boats?

2 Q. Well --

3 A. -- boats, well, honestly, I mean was very few. I  
4 mean I'll tell you it was, it was sailboats up here in this  
5 area. Up here I didn't see none, but up this way, honestly I  
6 would say probably I saw no more than 5, 4 or 5 boats.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Yeah. Yeah. But I'll tell you, when I came by, I  
9 did see a lot of boats was docking, you know, over the, you  
10 know, the --

11 Q. Up on the --

12 A. No, up at the (indiscernible) right down here, across  
13 the street from the Sagamore.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That would be like over this  
15 way, right?

16 MR. RAHAL: They -- what they call it?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, yeah, that would be across  
18 from the --

19 MR. RAHAL: Yeah. Usually people (indiscernible)  
20 right over here in this corner as a matter of fact. Yeah.  
21 There are rock bay --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (indiscernible) rock?

23 MR. RAHAL: Yeah. Yeah. Right here.

24 BY MR. TURRELL:

25 Q. Did you, when you came upon the boat when it was

1 overturned, the Ethan Allen, did you see, was the propeller  
2 turning still? Do you recall seeing the propeller turning?

3 A. No. I did not see. No, the propeller wasn't  
4 turning, but I'll tell you it's -- I -- you could still see,  
5 smell the burning, you know --

6 Q. Burning oil.

7 A. -- burning oil, burning gas, fumes, something  
8 burning.

9 Q. Smoke?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Was the -- can you tell if the rudder was deflected  
12 at all? Was the rudder turned when you looked at it or was  
13 it --

14 A. I saw it up and down, but in what position, I had  
15 not --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I honestly, I was not (indiscernible).

18 Q. Okay. Can you estimate in time how long it was in  
19 minutes from the time you saw the Mohegan to the time you saw  
20 the smoke?

21 A. In time I would say probably like maybe about eight  
22 minutes.

23 Q. Okay. When you went by the Mohegan, did you go  
24 through their wake by chance?

25 A. (indiscernible). No, I probably, I mean, I mean

1 truthfully, this is what I know. Everybody knows the lake  
2 knows specifically the Mohegan, and -- small little boats that  
3 have its own waves and I mean I crossed them one time long time  
4 ago. I had a 16-foot boat, and my wife was laughing at me. I  
5 mean we ended up being, getting shower, and oh, my lord. I  
6 mean (indiscernible), but when I saw that boat, I mean I always  
7 tried to stay away from anybody on the lake. (indiscernible)  
8 my big-size boat and you know I got my (indiscernible). I mean  
9 the lake is a (indiscernible). It's not like a car. Even a  
10 car sometimes you hit the brakes doesn't even stop right away.  
11 Yeah, but I, I mean it -- no matter who you are, when that boat  
12 goes by, you're going to feel its wake. You will feel it.

13 Q. Can you estimate the height of the, the waves that  
14 you have --

15 A. Truthfully, I mean I passed him quite far. I mean  
16 because my boat didn't even shake when I went over his wake.

17 Q. Can you -- when you, when you passed by the  
18 Mohegan --

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. Can you tell us how far laterally you were away from  
21 the Mohegan when --

22 A. Well, let's put it that way. I mean the kids, he had  
23 to toot the horn two, three times for people to hear him and  
24 started waving back. So I would say -- I don't know maybe,  
25 maybe like a mile.



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Not, not -- half a mile, maybe half a mile, yeah.

3 Q. Okay. And when you were, when you passed the  
4 Mohegan, can you estimate how far you were offshore?

5 A. I would say probably about the same distance as the  
6 Mohegan.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. About the same distance, yeah.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So figure about a half a mile offshore.

11 Q. Sure. So I don't think I -- what, what type boat you  
12 have?

13 A. It's a Sea Ray.

14 Q. Nice boat.

15 A. It's a 27-foot, 10½ feet wide.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Twin engine.

18 Q. Nice boat.

19 A. It's a big boat, yeah. So like I said I mean and  
20 usually you know even with those boats, you know, with big  
21 waves you can --

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. -- still feel the bumping up and down, I'll tell you,  
24 and, and I kid you not. Usually I don't even go that fast with  
25 that boat, but that day was so nice, and I mean --

1 Q. Was it glass?

2 A. Sure, just like sheet of ice.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Honestly I, I mean the only thing is was the little  
5 bit, just a little bit cool (indiscernible) air. You know, if  
6 you stand over the windshield it feels a cold, chills in the  
7 air. But besides that, it's, ah.

8 Q. What color is your boat?

9 A. It's gray and green.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. As a matter of fact, was (indiscernible) I mean I  
12 don't leave the scene until like the last people, which is --

13 Q. Uh-huh. What time did you leave the scene? What  
14 time did you --

15 A. The short time I was done -- 8 o'clock, 7, 8 o'clock,  
16 something like that.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, it was probably  
18 around --

19 MR. RAHAL: Yeah, yeah.

20 BY MR. TURRELL:

21 Q. So you estimate you, you pulled out five or six  
22 persons and two, two --

23 A. Two unconscious people, yeah. Matter of fact, both  
24 of them were females.

25 Q. Okay.

1           A.    I was going like that -- was, one of the, one of the  
2 people who I lift up was her mother and one of the gentlemen  
3 was his wife.    So, oh, yeah.

4           Q.    When you arrived on the scene you said there were --  
5 were there already life preservers in the water when you  
6 arrived?

7           A.    No.

8           Q.    No.

9           A.    I didn't see none.

10          Q.    You didn't see any --

11          A.    Absolutely none.

12          Q.    Okay.

13          A.    Absolutely none.    The only things I, I saw like I  
14 told you it's just, you know, it's like the water was calm and  
15 it's like the boat upside down, and there was whole bunch of  
16 people old -- sitting close as possible.

17          Q.    On the back, on the right side, on the starboard?

18          A.    Yes, that's it.    I mean if you put the boat back up  
19 so (indiscernible) and the back right rear end of the boat.

20          Q.    Okay.

21          A.    Because the boat was turned upside down so they're  
22 actually facing this way.

23          Q.    Okay.    And could you tell if the boat was floating  
24 evenly or was it down by the --

25          A.    Was -- I mean I would say hypothetically say -- I

1 would say this is the level of the water. I see the boat like  
2 this, just like this.

3 Q. Okay. Okay.

4 A. I saw the boat kind of like this.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And that's how I saw --

7 Q. The propeller and rudder?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Okay. So you couldn't see the entire craft, you just  
10 saw the --

11 A. Like I said, see, I mean I figure that was like a  
12 quarter of --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. That's why -- I mean was already almost three-  
15 quarters of the way the boat was --

16 Q. Could you just initial that and date it the 13th? Do  
17 you recall ever -- do you recall seeing actually sink out of  
18 sight while you were on --

19 A. Yes, yes.

20 Q. Do you recall when that was?

21 A. I would say right after when everybody came in after  
22 when the sheriff popped in, you know, the fire boat, and, you  
23 know, the, the you know the Lake George Commissioner.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. And I would say honestly I felt like kind of the boat

1 was holding until we lifted everybody up, honest to God, and  
2 that, then I looked for the boat, boom, it disappeared.

3 Q. Okay. Do you recall how many people were actually  
4 hanging onto this part when you first arrived to just --

5 A. I have no --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. One thing that I know was whole bunch of people. I  
8 mean maybe all the survivor. I, honestly, I would not know.

9 Q. Uh-huh.

10 A. To give you an accurate account, I would not know.

11 Q. The time you think the boat actually sank out of  
12 sight and the time between when you arrived and when it finally  
13 disappeared?

14 A. Probably I would say probably I would say maybe the  
15 boat probably didn't last there more than 10 minutes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. But the time I got there and maybe 10 minutes could  
18 be too long, but by the time I got there to the time we lifted  
19 the people from the boat went down.

20 Q. Okay.

21 MR. TURRELL: Walter, any questions?

22 SGT. SCHEDEL: No. Got everything covered.

23 MR. TURRELL: Is there anything you'd like to add or  
24 I didn't cover perhaps that you'd like to tell us?

25 MR. RAHAL: No, honestly -- I mean I can just say few

1 things off record, but --

2 MR. TURRELL: Sure.

3 MR. RAHAL: I mean under the circumstances, I mean  
4 this is my honest opinion (indiscernible).

5 MR. TURRELL: Okay. We'll go ahead and stop the  
6 recording.

7 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled  
8 matter was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:           Investigation of MV Ethan Allen  
                                  Lake George, New York  
                                  October 2, 2005  
                                  Interview of Mounir Rahal

DOCKET NUMBER:           DCA 06 MM 001

PLACE:                    Washington, D.C.

DATE:                     October 13, 2005

was held according to the record, and that this is the  
original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been  
compared to the recording accomplished at the hearing.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katherine Motley  
Transcriber